

*The Holy Scriptures a perfect Rule, and
Popish Objections answered.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached on the
Lord's Day, Jan. 26, 1734-5.

I N
St. Thomas Apostle, London.

*Scripturæ perfectæ sunt, quippe a verbo Dei & Spiritu
ejus dictæ.* Iren. adv. Hæres. Lib. iv. c. 47.



L O N D O N:
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To the Most Noble

The Duke of Newcastle.

*who after having been a Curm to this Nation for years
was turned out of Tower in the year 1762*

My Lord,

THE Protestant Dissenters remember your Concern for them in the early part of your Grace's Life, when the Schism Bill was on the Carpet; they are very desirous by their Conduct to merit the continuance of your Favour and Countenance, being well assured of your being an Advocate for the Cause of Liberty and Charity.

Having had the Honour to be acquainted with your Grace in the last part of my Grammar-Learning, I beg leave to put this Discourse into your Hands. It is an Apology for the best of Books, and a Vindication of it from the base Reflections of the Papists. What the late excellent A. B. Tillotson says of some Persons being against Reason may be

The DEDICATION.

applied to the Despisers of the Bible.
The Papists are against the Bible,
because the Bible is against them.

Your Grace's known Attachment
to the Succession in the Person and
Family of our present gracious So-
vereign, and your Aversion to Po-
pery, and Slavery, its inseparable
Companion, is another Reason, that
hath induced me to beg your Grace's
Patronage of these Papers.

That your Grace may long enjoy
the Favour of your Prince, and be
the Darling of your Country, and
eminently useful in your high Sta-
tion, and at length be prepared for,
and advanced to greater and more
lasting Honours in that Kingdom
that cannot be moved, are the
Prayers of, *Your Grace's*

Most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

BENJ. AND. ATKINSON.

THE PREFACE.

WHEREAS, upon a general Apprehension of the Growth of Popery, a *Weekly Lecture* hath been set up to defend the Protestant Religion, in Concurrence with those worthy Brethren engag'd in that Service, I first preached, and now publish this Discourse. I heartily wish them good Success, as I do all our Brethren, whether in or out of the Establishment. If Christ be preached, and Hearts won over to the Love and Practice of real Goodness, I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, knowing this will turn to the Advantage of the Gospel. It is a Time for Protestants of all Denominations to unite against Popery, which is still the same cruel, idolatrous Religion it ever was: I bear no Ill-Will to any one on account of his Principles, and I hope I have said nothing offensive, farther than Truth will offend some People.

I have

The P R E F A C E.

I have given my Opinion freely about Subscription, which some among ourselves, probably would have had me forbore, but I think I could not have done Justice to my Subject, for we are not yet thoroughly purged from this and other things, which are Remains of Popery, and give the Missionaries of that Sect Hopes, that one time or other their Religion will be restored and re-established among us.

I freely own, I am more afraid of these Popish Remains, than I am of Romish Popery.

I have always thought Oaths and Subscriptions, when submitted to, are binding; but if Men can subscribe Calvinistical and Trinitarian Articles, who profess to be Anti-Calvinists, and Anti-Trinitarians, and to justify their Conduct say, they meant nothing by it, they must see these things in a different Light from their Neighbours: However, if they are easy in their own Minds, may they go on and prosper. I would not willingly offend any, but I must say, Amicus Socrates, Amicus Plato, sed magis Amica Veritas.

*There are many Causes to be assigned for the Growth of Popery among us; one I have already mentioned, another is gross Ignorance; for I believe most of their late Converts are
among*

The P R E F A C E.

among poor, ignorant, distressed People; and I wish Protestants (who are able) would learn of them, fac est & ab hoste doceri, to relieve the truly necessitous in their Neighbourhood, and disperse among them Bibles, and other good Books, and especially small Pieces against Popery. But I fear our own Divisions have been another great Cause, together with the Decay of the Power of Godliness; how is the Gold become dim! how is the most fine Gold changed!

Do not the Closets and Families of many Protestants witness against them?

I am not here to accuse any of my own particular Friends, but I would as one who (I trust) hath obtained Mercy to be faithful, call upon them to mind their Closet and Family Devotions, and let reading the Holy Scriptures be a constant Branch of every Day's Duty Morning and Evening, as well as Prayer, without which we preach in vain, and others hear in vain. Oh that prayerless Families would read over and over again that awful Threatning or Prediction, Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the Families that call not on thy Name. Jerem. x. 25. This is the way to keep out Popery, and what is more infinitely desirable, to revive dying Religion, and to remove that
Death

The P R E F A C E.

Death which is every where visible on the Institutions of God's House and Worship.

I would have this Discourse looked upon by my own Congregation, as performing my Promise, which I gave them under my Hand in October 1731.

All Blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are sincerely wished to them and theirs by

Bridgwater-Square,
Jan. 29. 1734-5.

BENJ. AND. ATKINSON.



The

The Holy Scriptures a perfect Rule.

2 Tim. iii. 15. the latter part.

Which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, thro' Faith which is in Christ Jesus.

WHEN the Church of Rome (*whose Faith in St. Paul's time, was spoken of throughout the World*) (a) in a course of many Ages, had departed from this Faith once, and at once delivered to the Saints (b). Giving heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils (or Doctrines concerning Demons) (c) It pleased God to raise up Luther, Calvin, and many other pious and learned Men, to set on foot the Reformation, which happily succeeded, and took place

(a) Rom. i. 8. (b) Jude 3. (c) Mr. Mede's Disc. on 1 Tim. iv. 1, &c.

in many Cities and Kingdoms, which were delivered from that Burden of false Doctrines, and numerous, as well as ridiculous Ceremonies; and what was worse, of a spiritual Tyranny under which the Christian World had groaned for several Centuries. The grand Principle they went upon in reforming the Church was, that as the sacred Scriptures were left for the Use of the Church, so they were a compleat and perfect Rule.

This being one of the great Principles on which the Reformation is built, I think it will be proper to consider it at this time, *when there is a general apprehension of the growth of Popery.*

In the beginning of this Chapter, St. Paul foretells, *that in the last Days perilous Times will come: At length observes, that evil Men and Seducers will wax worse and worse:* Upon which occasion, he exhorts his Son Timothy in the following manner, *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. And that from a Child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able*

to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus. We may observe here, Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures ἀπὸ βεβήκας from a Child, in very early Age: And you whom God hath blessed with Children, may learn hence to teach them the Holy Scriptures, as soon as they are capable of reading and understanding them. Ignorance was not the Mother of Devotion among the Primitive Christians.

We have also a great Commendation of the Holy Scriptures, *they are able to make us wise unto Salvation, thro' Faith, which is in Christ Jesus.*

By these Holy Scriptures, we are doubtless to understand the Old Testament, but then it is added, *thro' Faith, which is in Christ Jesus*, by which we may understand the Doctrine of Salvation, which tho' darkly hinted in the Old Testament, is clearly revealed in the New. *For Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel (a).*

(a) 2 Tim. i. 10.

The Words are an entire proposition, *that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are able to make us wise unto Salvation.* I shall

I. prove to you the truth of this Assertion.

II. I shall shew you, that this great Principle was taught and believed by the earliest Christian Writers, after the Apostles decease.

III. I will consider and answer the objections of the *Romanists* against it, and then apply it.

I. I am to prove, *that the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto Salvation*, and consequently, that they are a perfect Rule of Faith, Worship, and Practice to Christians.

The Scriptures are called *Holy*, to distinguish them from all other Writings, because they were given by *Inspiration of God* (a). And they were written by holy Men, *for the Prophecy came not in*

The Assertion proved.

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old time by the will of Men, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (a). And they were designed to make us holy in Heart and Life.

1. This Assertion may be proved from my Text, especially taken in connection with what follows, *the Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, thro' Faith, which is in Christ Jesus*. Are they able to make us wise unto Salvation? Then they are a perfect Rule to us, how we are to worship God, and how to behave in this State of Probation and Trial.

It then follows, *all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God*; the Syriac translates it, *All Scripture that is given by Inspiration of God*; and I think this is rather more agreeable to the Original, as well as to the Apostle's design in this place. All Scripture divinely inspired, is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness. That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works (b). If the Holy Scriptures are able to make us

F. (a) 2 Pet. i. 21. (b) Πᾶσα γραφή, θεοπνεύστος. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

wife unto Salvation, what can we want more? Or wherein can they be deficient, as a Rule of Faith, Worship, and Practice?

Furthermore, they are useful for all purposes, both speculative and practical to teach us what to believe, and what to practise: They are profitable to furnish the Mind, to change the Heart, and to reform the Life.

Lastly, Under this head, they can make the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good Work, and what is sufficient for Pastors, surely is sufficient for their Flocks.

2. Another Argument, to prove the Perfection of Scripture as a Rule of Faith, Worship and Practice, may be taken from those Cautions and Prohibitions, which are given us not to add to God's Word. *You shall not add unto the Word, which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it* (a). *Add thou not unto his Words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a Liar* (b). What insolence is it in any

(a) Deut. iv. 2. (b) Prov. xxx. 6.

Man, or number of Men, to add unto God's Word? Don't it look as if they could some way or other mend it?

And in the New Testament we have the following awful Passages. *Tho' we (Apostles) or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I again, if any Man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that you have received, let him be accursed* (a).

And there is a dreadful Curse, which I don't see how the Men of *Rome*, particularly who sat in the Council of *Trent*, can escape, without very sorrowful Repentance, *I testify to EVERY MAN*, (whether Pope, Cardinal, or inferiour Clergy, as well as Laity) *I testify to EVERY MAN, that heareth the Words of the Prophecy of this Book, IF ANY MAN SHALL ADD UNTO THESE THINGS, GOD SHALL ADD UNTO HIM THE PLAGUES THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK* (b). And yet the Council of *Trent* hath decreed that unwritten Traditions should be received, PARI

(a) *Gal.* i. 8, 9.

(b) *Rev.* xxii. 18.

- PIETATIS AFFECTU AC REVERENTIA CUM SCRIPTURA, these are their own Words, *i. e.* with the same pious Affection and Reverence with which we receive the Scripture (a).

3. The Holy Scriptures are a perfect Rule of Faith, Worship and Practice, because this is expressly, and in so many Words often asserted. *The Law of the Lord is PERFECT, converting the Soul;* and if the Law of the Lord, by his Blessing accompanying it, can do this, I am sure there is no need of any unwritten Traditions. The Psalmist goes on, *the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart, the command of the Lord is pure, enlightening the Eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean enduring for ever, the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether* (b). If the Scriptures then can rejoice the Heart, enlighten the Eyes, and make us clean, if they are true and righteous altogether, then they are perfect. *Thou, through thy Commandments, hast made me wiser than mine Enemies, for they are*

(a) Sess. 4. Bellarmine says the same, *Lib. iv. De verbo Dei.* (b) *Pf. xix. 7, 8, 9.*

ever with me. I have more understanding than all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation. I understand more than the Ancients, because I keep thy Precepts. And again, Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Path (a). q. d. Thy Word furnisheth my Head with right Notions, it also directs, governs, and influenceth my Practice.

4. To add no more in proof of this Assertion, the Holy Scriptures could not answer the end proposed by them; if they were not a perfect Rule of Faith, Worship and Practice, *they could not make us wise unto Salvation.*

It is true, these divine Records don't contain all Christ's Words and Actions, *but these are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name (b).*

These things have I written unto you, that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eter-

(a) *Pf. cxix. 98, 99, 100, 105.* (b) *John xx. 31.*

nal Life, and that you may believe on the Name of the Son of God (a).

II. I am now to shew you, that this Doctrine was taught and believed by the earliest Christian Writers after the Apostles deceased.

Of the many I might easily produce, I will give a few for a small Sample. *Clement* who lived *A. D.* 93. mentioned by *St. Paul* (b) in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, exhorts them to “search diligently the Scriptures, which are the true Oracles of the Spirit of God.” *Justin Martyr*, who flourished in the second Century, writes thus, “The true Religion is contained in the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles, who have taught all things necessary for us to know. We are not commanded to give credit to the Traditions and Doctrines of Men, but to those Doctrines which were published by the Prophets, and which Christ himself delivered. All things are to be brought to the Scriptures, and from thence are Arguments and Proofs to be fetched. For if a Man

(a) *John* i. 15, 13.

(b) *Phil.* iv. 3.

“ be asked never so often how many does
“ twice two make, he will say four; so
“ a Christian discoursing with others,
“ will always alledge the Scripture (a).

○ Can a Protestant say any thing more
to our purpose? *Irenæus's* Words are,
“ *Scripturæ perfectæ sunt, quippe a ver-*
“ *bo Dei & Spiritu ejus dictæ* (b).” *i. e.*
“ The Scriptures are perfect, because
“ they are dictated by the Word of God,
“ and his Spirit.”

Tertullian lived about *A. D.* 200, his
Opinion is this, “ I adore the fulness
“ of the Scripture. — Let *Hermo-*
“ *genes* shew that it is written; if it
“ be not written, let him fear that
“ Woe denounced against those who add
“ or diminish.” — “ We have the Apo-
“ files of the Lord for our Authors, who
“ never brought in any thing at their
“ own Will and Pleasure, but faithfully
“ delivered the Doctrine to the Nations,
“ as they received it from Christ: There-
“ fore, tho’ an Angel from Heaven should
“ preach another Gospel, we would say,
“ let him be accursed (c).”

(a) See his *Dial. cum Tryph.* (b) *Adver. Hæres. Lib. 2.*
c. 47. (c) *Adversus, Hermogenem. Adoro Scripturæ ple-*
nitudinem, &c.

I think it is not a difficult thing to prove, that the *Romanists* have brought in another Gospel.

Origen, in the same Century, delivers his Opinion the same way. " In the two
" Testaments, every Word that apper-
" taineth unto God, may be required
" and discuffed, and all knowledge of
" things out of them may be understood.
" But if any thing remains which the
" Holy Scripture doth not determine,
" no other third Scripture ought to be re-
" ceived to authorize any Knowledge (a)."

Jerome, who died an old Man, *A. D.* 420, thus expreffes his Mind, " What-
" foever we affirm, we ought to prove
" out of the holy Scriptures, the Speaker's
" Words have not fo much Authority,
" as the Lord's Command (a)."

Ambrose, who was born about 333, is of the same Opinion, " We ought to add
" nothing, no not for caution to God's
" Command: For if thou doft add or
" diminish, it is a prevaricating of the
" Command. The pure and simple form

(a) *Levit. Hom.* 5. (b) *Pf.* 98.

“ of the Command is to be kept: No-
“ thing, therefore, let it seem ever so
“ good, ought to be added to it—There-
“ fore, we ought not to add to, or take
“ away from the Commands of God:
“ And again, when the Scriptures are
“ silent, who will speak (a)?

Austin, born *A. D.* 354. says, “ In
“ those things which are plainly laid
“ down in the Scripture, all those things
“ are to be found which belong to Faith,
“ or direction of Life. Let us not hear
“ this, I say, this you say, but let us hear,
“ this saith the Lord. Here is God’s Book,
“ to whose Authority we on both sides
“ consent, both sides believe—*Ibi quæ-*
“ *ramus ecclesiam, ibi discutiamus causam*
“ *nostram*, &c. There let us seek the
“ Church, there let us discuss our Cause.
“ Let those things be taken from us,
“ which we cite or alledge one against
“ another, but not from the divine Ca-
“ nonical Books, for I will not, that
“ the holy Church be demonstrated from
“ the Documents of Men, but from the
“ Oracles of God.” Again, “ Read us
“ these things out of the Law, out of
“ the Prophets, or Psalms, or Gospel, or

(a) *Sanctis Scripturis non loquentibus, quis loquetur? De*
Paradis. c. 12.

22 *Popish Objections answered.*

“ the apostolical Epistles, do you read.
“ and we believe. Let no Man ask me
“ my Opinion, but let us hearken to the
“ Scripture, and submit our witty Reason-
“ ings to the Word of God.” I remember
also, I have read the following Passage in
this Father, and so I dismiss him, speaking
to a Donatist, “ *Non tu me, nec ego te,*
“ *sed ambo audiamus Dominum, i. e.* I will
“ not hear thee, nor shalt thou hear me,
“ but let us both hear the Lord,” viz.
speaking in his Word.

But it must be a very bad Cause, that
learned Men can't say somewhat for, at
least to deceive the Ignorant. I therefore
proceed,

III. To obviate and answer the Objec-
tions of the *Romanists* against this truth,
which is so well supported, both by the
sacred Writings, and by the unanimous
Consent of all the Christian Fathers for
several Centuries after the Apostolick Age.

1. They object, and say, the sacred
Scriptures acknowledge their own im-
perfection. *Many other signs truly did Je-
sus in the presence of his Disciples, which
are not written in this Book* (a). To

(a) *John* xx. 30.

To which I answer, all this is true, for we know St. *John* hath not related all that the other Evangelists have recorded concerning Christ: But how doth this prove, that the Evangelist in this place hints at the imperfection of the Scriptures? If you read what follows, it is plain he asserts the very reverse, for he adds, *But these are written that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life thro' his Name* (a). So that tho' all that Christ said and did is not committed to writing, which was not necessary, if it was not impossible (b); yet enough is written to bring us to Heaven, if we believe his Doctrine, obey his Word, depend on his Merits, and follow his Example.

But under this head, they urge us with other Passages of Scripture, *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust* (c). I reply, how doth it appear, that the Apostle meant any thing else besides the Doctrine of the Gospel? Which he had delivered unto him, called elsewhere, *the form of sound Words which he had heard of him in Faith and Love, which is in Christ Jesus* (d).

(a) *John* xx. 31. (b) *John* xxi. 25. (c) *1 Tim.* vi. 20.
(d) *2 Tim.* i. 13.

They

They object farther, the Apostle speaks thus, *Therefore stand fast, and hold the Traditions which you have been taught, whether by Word, or our Epistle* (a).

This, I think, is as little to their purpose as the other, for by Tradition is here meant the Gospel, which they had received either by word of Mouth, or by Epistle; and as to us, the whole Gospel may be called a Tradition, because the New Testament which contains it, hath been transmitted to us in a traditionary way; but how doth this prove, that the sacred Word is defective, and therefore unwritten Traditions are necessary to supply its supposed defects? Especially, when these unwritten Traditions contain Doctrines, not only added to the Doctrines taught by Christ and his Apostles, but subversive of them, and inconsistent with them.

2. They tell us, we (Protestants) allow, some things are not contained in the Word of God, which yet we practise. If they mean the Cross, God-Fathers, &c. I leave them to answer this Objection,

(a) 2 *Thess.* ii. 15.

who

who are Advocates for Ceremonies of human Invention. But if they mean the Observation of the first Day of the Week as the Christian-Sabbath, Infant-Baptism, and the like, I answer, that if we don't find enough in the sacred Scriptures to satisfy us these are divine Appointments, we ought to reject them; for my own part, I think both these Doctrines may be fairly and satisfactorily proved from the sacred Oracles.

As to the Lord's Day, *'we read that on the first Day of the Week the Disciples used to meet together to break Bread* (a). *And on the first Day of the Week, St. Paul advised the Corinthians, to lay by in Store as God had prospered them* (b). *And this is called the Lord's Day* (c), *as the Supper is called the Lord's Supper.*

Infant-Baptism, we think succeeds Infant-Circumcision, and Infants being a great part of every Nation, *they are first to be disciplined by Baptism, and afterwards to be taught to observe all*

(a) *Acts* xx. 7. (b) *1 Cor.* xvi. 2. (c) *Rev.* i. 10.

things

things whatsoever Christ hath commanded (d).

And whatever Objections are now made against Infant-Baptism, would have been of equal Force against Infant-Circumcision, and will hold good against Infant-Salvation.

3. And lastly, will they object and say, we can't by Scripture alone overthrow their Religion? For instance, where is it said in the Scripture, that the Pope of *Rome* is Antichrist, or that he is not Christ's Vicar, &c.?

I answer; it is sufficient that we prove the affirmative Articles of our Faith from Scripture; we have nothing to do with Errors, farther than to reject them as negative Articles. But to answer more directly to the purpose. Where is it forbidden in Scripture, that we should believe in *Mahomet*? As there is enough in the sacred Scripture to shew us the Absurdity of believing in any other but Christ, or that by believing in him, we shall

(a) *Matt.* xxviii. 19. 20.

reach Everlasting Life, consequently, there is no need of believing in *Mahomet*; yea, that by so doing, we should forsake the Scripture Method of Salvation. So if from the Scripture we prove its Perfection, we conclude, against the Romanists, that their unwritten Traditions are needless: But as to the Pope, we think so much is said of him in the Sacred Writings, that we may without Uncharitableness conclude, he is THE MAN OF SIN, THE WICKED ONE, THE SON OF PERDITION, spoken of and described by St. *Paul* (a), and in other Places of the New Testament.

I proceed now to the Application.

1. We hence conclude, to call the Holy Scriptures, *a Leaden Rule, a Nose of Wax, a Favourer of Heresies, a dumb Rule, &c.* is to cast very unjust and groundless Reflections upon them.

Such Reflections on the Word of God come with an ill Grace out of the Mouth of a Papist, because as a Christian he professes to believe it to be the Word of

(a) 2 *Thess.* ii. 3. &c.

God, and therefore ought to have the highest Veneration for it ; but such Reflections come worse out of the Mouth of a Protestant. And yet some Protestants have too much imitated our Popish Adversaries in this Particular. I have this however to offer to alleviate the Crime of those Protestants, who have treated the Holy Oracles too freely, that they first borrowed it of the Romanists, and this is not Language they dare stand to, but only have thrown out in the heat of Controversy, and which they have been ready to unsay in cooler Thoughts.

2. Are the Holy Scriptures able to make us wise unto Salvation ? Why then should not an honest Declaration that we believe them, be sufficient to entitle us to all the Privileges of Church Members ? This is a sufficient Test of a Man's Orthodoxy. To insist therefore upon Subscription to human Compositions, is so far to derogate from the Perfection of Scripture ; our own Catechism in the second Question says, " The Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the

" ONLY

“ ONLY RULE to direct us how we may
“ glorify and enjoy him.

Father *Fox*, the Martyrologist, seems to be almost the only Man in Queen *Elizabeth's* Time that understood thoroughly the main Principle on which Protestants can justify their Separation from *Rome*; for when called upon to subscribe Articles of Religion drawn up by fallible Men, he took out his *Greek* Testament, and said, *huic subscribam, I will subscribe this*, and if that will not satisfy you, I have only a small Prebendary at *Salisbury*, you may take it from me; and not without some Difficulty he kept that.

But to come nearer our own Times. About two Years before the Restoration, when several Divines were summoned by the then Civil Powers to settle Fundamentals in Religion, the late excellent Mr. *Baxter* was one of them, and bravely declared against Subscription to any humanly devised Articles of Faith.

A. B. Usher was nominated to be one, but he declined it, and proposed
Mr.

Mr. *Baxter* in his Room, who told them, amongst other things, “ that as to publick Professions, upon admittance to Communion, he thought thus much might suffice. In general, I do believe all that is contained in the sacred, canonical Scriptures, and particularly I believe what is explicitly contained in the ancient Creeds, and I desire all that is contained in the Lord’s Prayer, and I resolve upon Obedience to the Ten Commandments, and whatever else I can learn of the Will of God. And therefore he farther proposed the offering to the Parliament, THE CREED, THE LORD’S PRAYER, and THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, AS THE ESSENTIALS OR FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIANITY, containing all that is necessary to Salvation. When they objected, that this might be subscribed by a Papist or Socinian, his Answer was, it was so much the better, and the fitter to be the Matter of Concord: But if they were afraid of Communion with Papists and Socinians, it should not be avoided by making a new Rule or Test of Faith, which they will not subscribe to, or by forcing others to subscribe
“ more

“ more than they can do, but by calling
“ them to account, whenever in preaching
“ or writing they contradict or abuse the
“ Truth to which they have subscribed (a).

I am of Opinion, all civil Establishments of Religion will be attended with some Inconveniences or other. The Establishment at *Geneva* now seems to be the most entirely Protestant, consistent throughout, for instead of subscribing LXVI Articles, as they used to do 'till the Year 1708, their Ministers at their Ordination take a solemn Oath, to this Purpose: “ I do believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament
“ to be the Word of God, and do promise to be conformed to them in Doctrine and Practice;” and this I should think sufficient in all other Churches.

3. I infer, these Holy Scriptures ought to be read in our publick Assemblies; this was always a Branch of Religious Worship in the *Jewish Synagogues* (b), and afterwards in the Christian Church.

(a) *Dr. Calamy's Abridgment*, Vol. I. pag. 120, 121.

(b) *Acts* xiii, 27.

Some can't read, and others that can, (it is feared) too much neglect reading the Bible; in some Houses it is despised, in many it is too much slighted; wherefore, I think, by reading it in publick Assemblies, we pay publick Honour to it, as it deserves.

This part of the Worship of God's House ought to be attended upon, as well as the rest: There are no Words like the Words which the Holy-Ghost teacheth; no Language like the Language of the Bible; there is such a Majesty and Authority in the very Words of Scripture, that the reading them with Seriousness, by the Blessing of God, hath been very useful.

4. If we keep close to this Christian and Protestant Principle, that the sacred Oracles are a perfect Rule of Faith, Worship, and Practice, many Controversies among ourselves would be soon decided.

I am very confident, peaceable Dissenters are free from Schism, for separating from the present ecclesiastical Establish-

Establishment, in which some things are required, which to all of us appear doubtful, and to many among us, sinful; and the late famous Mr. *Hales*, of *Eaton* College, though a Minister of the Church of *England*, acquits us, asserting, "that if doubtful, and much more sinful Terms of Communion are imposed, and a Schism follows, the Imposers are the Schismatics, and not they who peaceably withdraw, or rather are forced to do it.

The Worship of Protestant Dissenters is, or I am sure may and ought to be regulated entirely by the Holy Scriptures. I don't know any Articles of Faith, or any Terms of Communion insisted upon, but what we have plain and express Authority for in the Sacred Writings: *The weak in the Faith we receive, but not to doubtful Disputations* (a). And it is with Pleasure I can tell you, the Popish Missionaries have made very few (if any) Profelytes among our People formerly. They always look upon us as most irreconcilable Enemies to their Principles.

(a) *Rom. xiv. 1.*

5. From what hath been suggested, I infer, there is no need of, nor any just foundation for *unwritten Traditions*; all the Arguments that are usually brought to support them have been already considered, and I hope fully answered; for they arise from mistaking the true and obvious Sense of two or three Passages of Scripture (a).

6. If the Holy Scriptures are a perfect Rule, then the Church of *Rome* is not only fallible (*i. e.* liable to mistake) but hath actually erred in this great and fundamental Point; what then becomes of the whole Popish Superstructure built on it, the Foundation being destroyed?

The proving and establishing this fundamental Doctrine is of very great Consequence; for it overthrows Popery, by sapping its very Foundation, and justifies the Reformation.

7. I infer also, that the Holy Scriptures are a perfect Rule of Worship, as well as of Faith and Practice. Some

(a) See Pages 18, 19, of the Sermon.

who allow the Inspired Writings to be a Perfect Rule of Faith and Practice, yet deny that they are of Worship, because then the Church could not have a Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, nor have Authority in Controversies of Faith. We, on the other hand, think the Scriptures would be an imperfect Rule, if they did not direct our Worship, as well as Faith and Practice.

I am so far a thorough and consistent Protestant, that if I am convinced that I believe or practise any thing inconsistent with the Word of God, I am ready to give it up.

8. *And Lastly*, We ought to be thankful, that we are favoured with these Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus; Thanks be to God, that this blessed Book is put into our Hands, and that we have been acquainted with it from our Childhood: It was the Privilege of the *Jews*, that *unto them were committed the Oracles of God* (a):

(a) *Rom. iii. 2.*

And now, in the close, from all that we have heard, let us, by way of Advice, 1. Take care that we set the highest Value on the Holy Scriptures, *which we have known from our Childhood.* Other Books are valuable and useful in their place, but not to be equalled with, much less preferred before them, as some eager Advocates for Subscription to human Forms seem to make them: As if fallible Men could better guard against Heresies, than Christ and his Apostles have already guarded against them in the Word.

THE BIBLE, THE BIBLE *only* (says *Chillingworth*) *is the Religion of Protestants.* One Word from the Sacred Scriptures will go farther towards convincing me of any Mistake in Religion, than 40 or 100 Citations from the Fathers, who were but Men at the best, and some of them ignorant and weak Men.

2. Let us daily converse with these Holy Scriptures, *which are able to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.* It is feared, that in many Families, of Professors, the

the Word of God is scarce looked into from one Lord's Day to another. I remember when Bibles were more commonly brought to the House of God, and used in our publick Worship than they are at present; by turning to the most remarkable Proofs of a Sermon your Memories would be greatly assisted; whereas now the most judicious Sermons are soon forgot, being seldom thought on seriously after the publick Worship is ended.

Let me exhort and charge you all to read the Scriptures every Day in your Retirements and Families; making Conscience of this, as well as of daily Prayer.

Among the many Causes of the Growth of Popery, Ignorance is undoubtedly one; and doth not Ignorance abound in those Families that scarce ever read the Word of God?

Another Cause of its Increase is the sad Decay of practical Godliness. How many prayerless Persons and Families are to be found among the Professors of this Day? More, I fear, than once I could

could have thought, and yet I must profess, I don't see how any Man can be reckon'd truly religious, who lives in the constant neglect of secret and family Prayer, or performs it in a careless, lifeless manner, without Spirit and Devotion.

As soon as your Children can read, put this Book of Books into their Hands, and help them to understand the most necessary things contained in it, as far as you are able.

And you that are in easy and plentiful Circumstances would do well to distribute Bibles among the poor; by dispersing them and other good Books, and especially by relieving their bodily Wants, many who are now perverted to Popery might have been preserved from that Faction.

3. *And Lastly*, above all, let us take Care, that the Holy Scriptures have this Effect upon us, *to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.* See to it that you believe and obey the Word of God; that you believe the Doctrines and Promises,
and

and that you obey the Precepts and Commands contained in this blessed Book.

When the Question is asked, *Where- with shall a young Man cleanse his Way?* The Answer follows, *by taking heed thereto, according to his Word* (a). *Let us make the Word a Lamp to our Feet, and a Light to our Path* (b). *Let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all Wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing, and making Melody in our Hearts unto the Lord* (c).

The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul (d). May it produce this saving Effect on each of our Souls! May we feel its converting Power! That under the Blessing of Heaven, whilst we converse with these Holy Scriptures, *we may be made wise unto Salvation*, then we shall be wise indeed; for they *that are wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament*. I close with these Words: *Blessed is the Man*

(a) *Pf. cxix. 9.* (b) *Ver. 105.* (c) *Col. iii. 16.*
(d) *Pf. xix. 7.*

that

that walketh not in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor standeth in the Way of Sinners, nor sitteth in the Seat of the Scornful! But his Delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night. And he shall be like a Tree planted by the Rivers of Water, that bringeth forth his Fruit in his Season; his Leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper (a).

(a) Ps. i. 1, 2, 3.

F I N I S.

